

Operation Identification

Keeping Property and Valuables Safe

Operation Identification, also known as Operation I.D., is one of the best crime prevention tools that citizens and police have against thieves. By taking the time to inventory, engrave, and photograph your valuables and personal household items, you will increase your chances of preventing a theft and of recovering your stolen property.

Most burglars sell what they steal, making it difficult for the police to trace stolen goods. Once items are stolen from your home they look just like thousands of other stolen and recovered items. A TV is a TV. And unless you can prove that an item belongs to you, the police cannot return it to you.

Operation ID is a crime prevention program in which people mark their valuables for protection and for identification. The Corvallis Police Department loans electric engravers free of charge so people can mark an identifying number on their property. Then, in the event a marked item is stolen and recovered, police use this number to contact the owner.

Without an Operation ID number, the chances of police matching an unmarked item with its owner decrease substantially. Each year Americans lose millions of dollars in property because they can not prove ownership to the police. But you can enhance the chances of your stolen property being recovered and returned to you when you mark your property.

Participating in Operation I.D. also reduces the likelihood of your valuables being stolen. Thieves think twice before stealing engraved property because marked property is difficult to dispose of. Operation I.D. also gives police a greater chance of tracing stolen items back to the thief.

Operation I.D. has been successful in reducing burglary and theft in communities where it is in effect. The program is free and takes but little time. So why not take time today to discourage the theft of your valuables by making it harder for the criminal. The following guidelines will help you get started.

To help protect your personal property, implement Operation Identification today.

What number should be engraved on your property?

Property should be engraved with your Oregon Driver License number in this manner, OR#####DL. Do not leave spaces between letters or numbers.

Items to Engrave

Engrave items that are portable, easily stolen, and readily saleable. In general, electronics are always high on a thief's list. TVs, DVD players, portable music players, cell phones, VCRs, CDs, stereos, computers, cameras, art works, small appliances, golf clubs and other sporting goods, tools, bikes, and yard equipment are all popular with thieves. Be sure to remember to mark items in your storage unit, vacation home, rental home, or other non-home location. For added security, on some items

you can engrave your I.D. number in a second, inconspicuous spot.

In addition to engraving items, it is also a good idea to photograph them, both for police and your insurance agent. One good way to do this is to dedicate a digital camera memory chip to inventory your belongings. Photograph the item and, if it has a serial number, photograph the number as well.

Where to Engrave Property

Engrave valuables such as your TV, VCR, stereo, and computer on the back side, upper right hand corner, and furniture on the bottom right hand side. Bikes should be engraved on the sprockets. Engrave your smaller items with care by using the lightest possible setting. For very small items you can use the point of a straight pin. Just take care to not deface any item.

Items Not to Engrave

Photograph but do not engrave items that will decrease in value if they are engraved or otherwise marked. This includes, but is not limited to, items such as silverware, coins, furs, antiques, china, watches, jewelry, collectibles, artwork, and rare or irreplaceable items.

How to Photograph Valuables

For all items, take at least one photograph of the entire piece. Make sure that the brand name is legible for items such as a TV or small appliance. That may require a second photograph if the item is large. If you need to take a second picture to show the brand, be sure that the picture includes enough of the object that you can prove the two pictures are of the same item.

An additional photographic record taken with a video camera provides an extra measure of security, especially for insurance purposes. A video recording makes for an easy way to photograph an entire room, large items such as furniture, and sets of collectibles with many pieces. It also is an easy way to photograph clothing.

For art, silver, china, furs, and collectibles, take at least one overview picture plus pictures of as many of its distinguishing features as needed to unmistakably identify the piece. When photographing a collection, photograph the entire collection in one picture and then each piece separately. For china, photograph the front and back of one piece with the label legible. You should photograph each of the serving pieces but it is not necessary to photograph the entire set as you can show the number of settings by photographing a stack of the dinner plates

For original art pieces, in addition to the overview, be sure to photograph the artist's signature and any other distinguishing features needed to prove it is an original. When photographing multi-sided objects such as sculptures or collectibles such as coins or dolls, be sure to take pictures of all the sides.

A good practice in making your photographic record is to place a ruler next to items that come in different sizes, are of a nature in which size is a component of value, or where accurate size will aid police in identification and recovery. Jewelry, all art, and collectibles are good examples. Another good practice is to include your driver license in the overview photograph as a way to show ownership.

Keeping Records

Maintain a property list by making a written inventory of all your household items. This list should at least mirror your photographic record. It is also a good idea to add to this list all of your other property, e.g., clothing, and any thing else that you did not photograph. It is a good idea to divide your inventory by rooms. That way you will have an accurate record if fire or some other kind of catastrophe destroys part of your house. If you make your list on a computer, print the list and keep it, along with your photographic record, in a bank safe deposit box.

Keep your individual pictures as your primary photographic record. If you make a video recording, consider it as a backup. Individual pictures are much easier for police and insurance companies to use. With the availability of digital cameras and no concern for film and print costs, take lots of pictures – it is far better to have extras than not enough.

Be sure to keep appraisal and authentication certificates in your bank safe deposit box. And keep original receipts for jewelry, art, furniture, appliances, electronics, collectibles, and valuables as part of your inventory. If you don't want to put these items in your safe deposit box, it is a good idea to photograph them on a digital memory chip that you do store in your safe deposit box.

New Purchases and Sale of Property

After purchasing new items, be sure to engrave them right away. When you sell any of your engraved property, be sure to write your Operation I.D. number, i.e., your driver license number, on the bill of sale.

Your Household Inventory Record should be updated every year.

Operation ID Decals

After your items have been engraved and recorded be sure to display your Operation I.D. decal. Place it on your door or window so it can be seen readily. If you do not have a sticker, please ask for one at the front desk of the Law Enforcement Center at 180 NW 5th St or you can send an e-mail to neighborhoodwatch@ci.corvallis.or.us requesting that one be mailed to you.

**IMPLEMENT OPERATION IDENTIFICATION TODAY.
IT REALLY WORKS.**

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